

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

19 H 158

Accent on Bacon and Ham



A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, May 11, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

- - - - -

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington again. And it's another fine May day though a little bit on the warmish side maybe. But looking very cool and collected here, is Ruth Van Deman, ready to give you another report on what the Bureau of Home Economics is accomplishing in its research for homemakers.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, instead of looking cool and collected and talking about research, do you know what I'd like to be doing?

KADDERLY:

Why no, what?

VAN DEMAN:

I'd like to be out in Rock Creek Park, in my old clothes, frying bacon or nice thin slices of ham at one of those stone fireplaces. Maybe you'd split and butter the rolls - and perhaps Mike Rowell would put the water on to boil for the coffee, I'm sure he wouldn't mind the smoke getting in his eyes - - -

KADDERLY:

Ruth, are you trying to get us to play hooky. It's hard enough for a man to leave his garden in the morning and go to work --- without tantalizing him with the smell of bacon frying over an open fire in the woods ---

VAN DEMAN:

Well, you suggested we put the accent on bacon and ham today.

KADDERLY:

Yes, but we'll have to keep it strictly indoors.

VAN DEMAN:

All right. I'll try. But it's a little hard to do that on a day like this --- right at the beginning of the open season for picnics --- and with bacon and ham the Class A meats that they are for picnic purposes.

KADDERLY:

I agree with you absolutely on bacon and ham as picnic meats. And, by the way, I understand there's a sound reason in physiology why we like those cured meats in warm weather.

VAN DEMAN:

You mean because of the salt?

(over)

KADDERLY:

Yes, we lose so much salt in perspiration that instinctively we try to make it up in our food. In mills and factories where men are working under intense heat it's been found that they're less fatigued and less likely to keel over exhausted by the heat, if they have drinking water with some salt added.

VAN DEMAN:

That's very interesting. I'm going to try that when the mercury gets to soaring along in July and August.

KADDERLY:

And that smoke from the wood fire you mentioned a moment ago, that reminds me of something about the curing of bacon and ham we've inherited from a long way back. Undoubtedly, our modern methods of smoking meat go back to the old days when people had to build a smudge under the meat as it was drying to keep the flies away.

VAN DEMAN:

And I suppose they discovered that hickory chips give the best flavor.

KADDERLY:

Umm, hickory or some of the hardwoods. They make an aromatic smoke. In the packing plants hardwood is the only wood used for smoking meats. Any wood with resin in it might leave a turpentiny flavor on the meat.

VAN DEMAN:

And what about that term "sugar-cured" you see on the label on a package of bacon or a ham? Somebody wrote me once and asked just what that meant.

KADDERLY:

Sugar cured of course is what most of the packaged sliced bacon is. It's dry cured with a mixture of salt and sugar rubbed into it before it's smoked.

VAN DEMAN:

Then sugar is used.

KADDERLY:

Yes, sugar like the sugar in your sugar bowl - not corn sugar or molasses.

And when you see bacon labeled Georgia bacon, it means that bacon came from the State of Georgia.

VAN DEMAN:

And Virginia ham is Virginia ham.

KADDERLY:

Yes, every label of that sort has to mean what it says, when it's on a piece of meat that crosses State borders. All such labels have to be cleared through the Federal Meat Inspection Service here in the Department of Agriculture.

But, Ruth, I seem to be doing most of the talking here. How about you, giving us the latest on how to cook bacon---how to get it on the plate in those crisp brown strips with just a little wave along the edges ---

VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, it's plain to be seen you like your bacon the American way. An Englishman, you know, wants his bacon soft---cooked only long enough to get it hot through.

KADDERLY:

Not for me. Bacon's pork. I want it thoroughly cooked. I don't want to take any chances on trichinosis. And, I want my bacon brown to give it the right flavor. And by brown, I don't mean burned.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, if you'll just pickup that leaflet under your elbow there --- Cooking Cured Pork ---

KADDERLY:

This something new, Ruth?

VAN DEMAN:

No, don't you recognize that old friend ---one of the four tried and true meat leaflets. You remember --- beef --- lamb --- pork --- and this one Cured pork.

KADDERLY:

I remember, yes. But I'd forgotten what nice pictures these are --- "ham with spicy brown sugar coating --- and fairly bristling with cloves I see. They help to keep that brown coating on the slices. And this one, "Ham and pineapple, an appetizing combination".

VAN DEMAN:

Keep on turning. You'll come to the bacon next.

KADDERLY:

"Crisp bacon with apple rings" right here.

VAN DEMAN:

And the directions there say to cook bacon slowly and turn frequently. That's one way to cook it so it's crisp.

KADDERLY:

Do you start with the skillet hot or cold?

VAN DEMAN:

Cold, or anyway not more than moderately hot. And don't ever let the bacon get so hot the fat smokes. When bacon fat burns, a very undesirable chemical change takes place. The fat decomposes and gives off a substance called acrolein. It's very irritating to the mucous membranes in the nose and throat -

KADDERLY:

You mean that unpleasant sharp odor you smell when bacon burns.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that's characteristic of the vapors from acrolein.

And the streaks of lean in bacon that's fried too hard and too fast, get very hard and dry.

To fry bacon so it's crisp and tender and ruffled along the edges - the way you described it, Wallace - you want three things.

First of all good, fresh evenly sliced bacon - not moldy, not rancid.

Then a heavy skillet - that holds and distributes the heat evenly. Put the strips of bacon in the cold skillet and heat it up slowly. Watch it, and turn it as soon as it begins to sizzle. Turn several times.

And then when it's done, lift it out onto a piece of thick soft paper - a paper towl is perfect - and let it drain. And that's all there is to it.

KADDERLY:

It sounds to me as though you were applying to bacon that same theory of cooking with moderate heat that you recommend using for other meats.

VAN DEMAN:

Exactly. And once you get the bacon cooked crisp there are so many things you can do with it besides just serving it as bacon. We didn't have room in the leaflet there even to list them.

KADDERLY:

I like little picces of crisp bacon stirred into greens, for seasoning.

VAN DEMAN:

Excellent. And a bacon and vinegar dressing on garden lettuce is good. And bacon muffins ---

KADDERLY:

Bacon muffins? I don't know about them.

VAN DEMAN:

The little pieces of crisp bacon stirred into the muffin batter, in place of some of the other fat. Very good in corn muffins or any kind of corn-bread.

KADDERLY:

Excuse me, Ruth, I think the engineer in the control room is trying to get your attention ---

VAN DEMAN:

What's the matter am I forgetting my microphone manners?

KADDERLY:

He's holding up - note against the glass. "Save me bullettin - how to cook bacon".

VAN DEMAN:

That's for you, Wallace. I'll run along and let you settle that between you.

KADDERLY:

Ad lib - bulletin offer. #####